

## *Ask the Chief.....*

### **Has the establishment of the Lake County Sheriff's Office Heroin Task Force made an impact in our community?**

Such a question is so pertinent from a very frustrated community who has felt the impact of heroin addiction in their homes, schools and businesses. So I have asked Capt. Ronald Walters, our Detective Bureau Commander, to speak about the progress of our Heroin Task Force. Here is what he had to say.

"2016 was the second full year of operation for the Lake County Heroin Task Force which was formed at the end of 2014. The task force staffed by two detectives has been active on many fronts this past year to include:

In 2016 Lake County Heroin Task Force Detectives handled a total of 235 cases, 188 cases were heroin related, filed a total of 43 felony charges and 6 misdemeanor charges. In addition through the efforts of the task force charges were filed in a number of cases by other agencies.

Lake County Heroin Task Force Detectives in 2016 have attended Town Hall style meetings hosted by no profit support/awareness groups such as Clean Start and others. Detectives have also initiated a public awareness campaign via Facebook in which actual letters from heroin addicted inmates are posted for their educational value and/or teaching/discussion points with teenagers. The Task Force has also posted educational clips detailing the effects of heroin on the human body.

Task Force Detectives has formed partnerships with private non-profit organizations such as Clean Start to assist in getting dependent people into treatment facilities. This program thus far has been very beneficial especially for families who refuse to prosecute a loved one.

New this year with the passage of Senate Bill # 110 the task force detectives have established a data base to track heroin overdoses for compliance with the bill's provisions. If a person does not seek treatment and provide law enforcement with documented proof of such treatment or referral to treatment within 30 days they may be charged.

The Task Force has also assisted the Lake County Narcotics Agency on a number of fronts, from running confidential informants, assisting in search warrants, conducting surveillance, to conducting various narcotics buys. The tasks can be time consuming and labor intensive operations to build a strong criminal case.

Continued enhancement of the Pawn Data base, utilized to identify suspicious transactions. More often than not the stolen items are from family members who did not even realize they were missing. In these cases a high percentage of families refuse to prosecute. In cases in which they do opt to prosecute the family usually wants them to get into some type of treatment. The criminal charge is used as leverage to accomplish this.

In 2017 the Lake County Heroin Task Force will focus on assisting local law enforcement with manpower in the battle against the heroin epidemic and continue to work on confidential informant development to be utilized with a focus on the dealers of controlled substances.

The Task Force will also continue to grow and enhance existing established programs all the while looking to find new and innovative ways to combat the heroin epidemic in Lake County, be it through enforcement action or education and treatment. We can make a difference when we work as one.”

*Capt. Ronald Walters*

Lake County Sheriff's Office  
Detective Bureau Commander